

Message Text

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ACTION EA-09

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 ISO-00 CIAE-00 INR-07 IO-13 JUSE-00

NSAE-00 SNM-02 TRSE-00 USIA-06 NSC-05 OES-06 OMB-01

AID-05 ARA-06 DODE-00 /073 W

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FM AMEMBASSY BANGKOK

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 5398

INFO AMCONSUL CHIANG MAI

AMCONSUL HONG KONG

AMEMBASSY KUALA LUMPUR

AMEMBASSY MANILA

AMEMBASSY RANGOON

AMEMBASSY SINGAPORE

AMEMBASSY VIENTIANE

DEA HQS WASHDC

AMEMBASSY THE HAGUE

AMEMBASSY JAKARTA

AMEMBASSY OTTAWA

AMEMBASSY PARIS

C O N F I D E N T A L BANGKOK 29943

FROM AMBASSADOR WHITEHOUSE FOR AMBASSADOR VANCE, S/NM

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: SNAR, TH, US

SUBJ: OPIUM -- THE STATISTICAL MORASS

SUMMARY: THIS MISSION HAS LONG BEEN PREOCCUPIED WITH THE CONTRADICTION NATURE OF BASIC INFORMATION ON OPIUM PRODUCTION AND CONSUMPTION. THE RECENTLY-PUBLISHED DEA QUARTERLY INTELLIGENCE TRENDS (FALL, 1976) RAISES MORE QUESTIONS THAN IT ANSWERS. WE NEED A MUCH CLEARER PICTURE OF THE SITUATION THAN IS PRESENTLY AVAILABLE. END SUMMARY.

1. THE PROBLEM: THIS MISSION HAD LONG BEEN PREOCCUPIED WITH
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THE CONTRADICTION NATURE OF THE BASIC INFORMATION BEING USED BY

THE USG IN ASSESSING THE NATURE OF THE GOLDEN TRIANGLE OPIUM PROBLEM.

2. THE FRAGILITY OF CURRENT U.S. OFFICIAL ESTIMATES IS CLEARLY DEMONSTRATED BY THE DEA QUARTERLY INTELLIGENCE TRENDS REPORT OF FALL, 1976. THE REPORT MAKES A LAUDABLE ATTEMPT TO MAKE SENSE OUT OF THIS ELUSIVE ISSUE. UNFORTUNATELY, THE REPORT'S CONCLUSIONS ONLY CONFIRM THE INADEQUACY OF OUR BASIC INFORMATION.

3. PRODUCTION: THE DEA ESTIMATE OF YEARLY GOLDEN TRIANGLE OPIUM PRODUCTION, WHICH UNDOUBTEDLY INCLUDES INFORMATION FROM OTHER INTELLIGENCE SOURCES, IS AS FOLLOWS:

BURMA	390 TONS PER ANNUM
THAILAND	50 TONS PER ANNUM
LAOS	50 TONS PER ANNUM
TOTAL	490 TONS PER ANNUM

(COMMENT: TO SIMPLIFY THE PROBLEM, LET US ASSUME THAT LAO PRODUCTION AND CONSUMPTION ARE RELATIVELY IN BALANCE. THIS IS THE ASSUMPTION WE HAVE MADE OVER THE YEARS ON THE GROUNDS THAT LITTLE, IF ANY, ILLICIT OPIUM SEEMED TO LEAVE LAOS FOR INTERNATIONAL MARKETS. THIS LEAVES US WITH AN ANNUAL PRODUCTION FOR ASIAN, EUROPEAN, AND NORTH AMERICAN CONSUMPTION OF WELL OVER 400 TONS. END COMMENT.)

4. CONSUMPTION: THE DEA ESTIMATE OF CONSUMPTION PER YEAR IS AS FOLLOWS:

	ADDICTS	HEROIN (KILOGRAMS)	OPIUM (EQUIVALENT METRIC TONS)
U.S.	450,000	5,750	57.50
CANADA	20,000	250	2.50
EUROPE	30,000	380	3.80
BURMA	200,000	NA	25.0
HONG KONG	100,000	NA	12.5
THAILAND	300,000(N.B)	NA	38.0

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TOTAL	1,100,000	139.3
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(N.B. - CONSUMPTION IN SINGAPORE, INDONESIA, MALAYSIA AND POSSIBLY ELSEWHERE MIGHT WELL CHANGE THIS FIGURE TO SOME EXTENT.)

5. THE QUESTION: IF PRODUCTION IS OVER 400 TONS AND

CONSUMPTION ABOUT 140 TONS, WHERE DO THE EXTRA 260 OR SO METRIC TONS OF OPIUM EQUIVALENT GO? OR DO THEY EXIST AT ALL? WE RECOGNIZE THAT ANY STATISTICS ON THIS SUBJECT WILL BE SOFT, AND ONE COULD EASILY RATIONALIZE A 100 PER CENT MARGIN OF ERROR. HOWEVER, THE DISCREPANCY BETWEEN CONSUMPTION ESTIMATES DETAILED ABOVE OF ABOUT 140 TONS AND PRODUCTION OF OVER 400 TONS IS IMPOSSIBLE TO EXPLAIN, PARTICULARLY IF ILLICIT U.S. CONSUMPTION OF NARCOTICS CONSISTS LARGELY OF OPIUM PRODUCED IN MEXICO.

6. COMMENT: AS WE HAVE REPORTED ELSEWHERE, THE NEW THAI GOVERNMENT, UNDER PRIME MINISTER THANIN KRAIWICHIAN, APPEARS MUCH MORE INTERESTED IN DOING SOMETHING ABOUT THE NARCOTICS PROBLEM THAN HIS RECENT PREDECESSORS. WE WILL OBVIOUSLY NOT REVIEW THE FOREGOING CALCULATIONS WITH HIM BUT WE WOULD WELCOME THE COMMENTS OF ADDRESSEE POSTS ON THIS CURIOUS ANOMALY.
WHITEHOUSE

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